

THE CHURCH AS THE AGENT OF PROCLAMATION

A Professional Project
Presented to
the Faculty
School of Theology at Claremont

In Partial Fulfillment
of the requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Ministry

by
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June 1976

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has been presented to and accepted by the Faculty
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ABSTRACT

The Church is an agent of proclamation. In this role, the Church must make use of language, for language is the means of proclamation. Because of this, language itself must be scrutinized. The advocates of the so-called "New Hermeneutic" provide the primary resource for this examination of language. Indebtedness is owed to Gerhard Ebeling in particular. It is language which makes possible all proclamation, for language has the unique ability to convey reality and hence it conveys the Word of God which can and may be proclaimed and heard in the words of men. Jesus' proclamation revealed God. The Word which Jesus proclaimed was God's Word. The Word which Jesus proclaimed is the same Word which the Church has today which gives authority to its role as the agent of proclamation.

As background, the development of the Church is traced from its roots in the Old Testament to its birth as proclaimed in the New. It is shown that language not only makes possible all proclamation, it also acts as a binding agent of community, the Church, the Body of Christ. It is this binding process which makes possible the proclamation of the Word, and hence the Church is the agent of proclamation.

INTRODUCTION

The Church has existed as a continually functioning entity for almost two thousand years. Erected and dedicated to the proclamation of the Good News of Jesus Christ, it has sought to be faithful to this mission for the entire course of its existence. However there has been a great deal of disagreement as to how the church is to proclaim this good news. The common denominator in all who claim to be Christian is that there is a special and unique relationship with Jesus Christ. It is the Church which provides the means of encountering and experiencing the risen Christ. One may truly say that this is an encounter with the Holy. There must be an encounter with the Holy and this allows one to hear the Good News. This calls for a theological undertaking which usually takes the form of a pilgrimage.

A theological pilgrimage will take one to many shrines. However, before this journey can be undertaken, it must be emphasized that it is a pilgrimage, a quest for the revelation of the divine. Most theology emphasizes the rational aspects of God, i.e. "Spirit, reason, purpose, good will, supreme power, unity, self-hood"¹ and so on. But does a complete theological pilgrimage content itself with a quest for the rational alone? Rudolf Otto asks "in our idea of God is the non-rational overborne, even perhaps wholly excluded, by the rational? Or

¹Rudolf Otto, The Idea of The Holy (New York: Oxford University Press, 1923), p. 1.

conversely, does the non-rational itself preponderate over the rational"?²

It is most easy to emphasize one and scoff at the other. But in keeping a desired balanced perspective, both the rational and non-rational must be dealt with, yet in few sermons or theological treatises are they presented together. Otto dealt with both in his masterful work The Idea of the Holy. In it he stated that the conveyance of the "numinous," that is experiencing the Holy, "is least of all possible by mere verbal phrase or external symbol. . . ." ³ He goes on to state that "Little of it can be noticed in theory and dogma, or even in exhortation, unless it is actually 'heard.'"⁴ How does one hear? One hears by means of language, the language of the proclaimed Word of God which is found in the Church.

Language is an important but frequently overlooked shrine on the Christian theological pilgrimage. Those who have done significant work in establishing the importance of this shrine are the European theologians Gerhard Ebeling and Ernst Fuchs, and here in the United States, Robert W. Funk. The whole question of the relation of language to the cosmos and the human situation, and more particularly the Church, is something with which they deal carefully. They and their works are pivotal points on a contemporary theological pilgrimage. These men are

²Ibid., p. 3. By non-rational Otto is referring to the "Mysterium Tremendum" which conjures up feelings of "awefulness," "overpoweringness," "energy," or "urgency" and ultimately the apprehension of the "Wholly Other." Ibid., p. 12ff.

³Ibid., p. 60.

⁴Ibid., p. 61.

advocates of a so-called "New Hermeneutic," a new look at the way in which the Word of God is revealed, proclaimed, and hence binds the Church. In examining the concept of "Word of God," these theologians have done critical work in the area of language and all that language conveys. One does hear the Word by means of language, but it also must be asked, "Where does one hear?" The answer is that one hears in and by means of the assembly of believers, the church, the Body of Christ.

"Science" and "scientific method" have become so important to modern man that mythological terms such as virgin birth and incarnation have been de-emphasized because they cannot be scientifically proven. The personal experience of the risen Christ has been downplayed and social concerns and rational, empirical explanations for the mysteries of the faith have risen to a greater place of prominence. What main-line Protestantism appears to have done is to make bed-fellows of eighteenth century Rationalism and the nineteenth century Social Gospel.

Alan Richardson states this about "Rationalism." "In theology reason was held by a long succession of thinkers (from Aquinas to the Deists) to be a source of the knowledge of God. . . ."

A neo-rationalism has held sway in the twentieth century, with theologians seemingly to draw their primary questions from philosophy. Two examples of theologians doing this are Rudolf Bultmann addressing questions raised by Martin Heidegger's work and John Cobb drawing from Alfred North Whitehead's thought. The rationale seems to be that philosophers ask the questions and theologians strive to answer them.

Along with this neo-rationalism there is a strong emphasis on the social imperatives of the gospel. As J. J. McNeill states:

The full impact of the industrial revolution . . . led to the rise of Christian social movements which addressed themselves to the human problems involved in the unequal distribution of wealth, the rise of the labor movement, and the development of vast cities with teeming slums.⁵

With reason being emphasized as the primary means of revelation, and a changing social condition which called for attention, the Church found its focus.

However, this was not a unanimous response, and many felt that neither this neo-rationalism nor the Social Gospel movement was the complete proclamation of the Word of God. Among the most outspoken critics were the so-called "fundamentalists." The fundamentalists drew their name from a series of tracts issued in the United States in the first two decades of this century and which carried the general title of "The Fundamentalists."

They were written by eminent evangelical leaders and theologians (including B. B. Warfield, James Orr, H. C. G. Moule, and G. Campbell Morgan); they expounded conservative views, such as the substitutionary theory of the atonement, the imminent return of Christ, the reality of eternal punishment, the necessity of conversion and of personal assurance of salvation, as well as the doctrine of the verbal inerrancy of scripture.⁶

Today, in the 1970's there seems to be a resurgence of fundamentalist theology. Probably the current economic uncertainty, reaction to the race struggles of the 1960's, and the Vietnam war have played important parts in this resurgence. But another reason is that many Christians do not feel that Churches have confronted and then bound them with the Word of God in the proclamation of the Church. A renewal of

⁵Alan Richardson, A Dictionary of the Christian Theology (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1969), p. 313.

⁶Ibid., p. 132.

the word is demanded. One of the crucial areas of concern is the relationship of scripture and the Word to the modern Church.

For unless the Biblical text, and the kind of reality to which it points, can in fact give meaning to life in the present age, then the need for the Christian faith, to say nothing of Christian theology, has been seriously compromised, if not eliminated.⁷

Many Christian people have left mainline Churches to find solace and foundation in "Bible preaching" fundamentalist churches, because they have felt that the neo-rationalist social gospel theology of the mainline churches has gone astray of the gospel, and the Word is neither proclaimed nor heard. But this is an extremely narrow, even reactionary view. The Church, as the means of making the revelation of God in Christ known to those who would hear the Good News, is essentially an agent of proclamation. The Word is not proclaimed by a literalist view of scripture, but by those who have encountered the risen Christ and have thus first heard the proclamation.

This project will first examine the biblical development of the Church, then it will show how the Church functions primarily as an agent of proclamation. It is language which conveys the proclamation of the Word, and it is language which serves as the bonding agent of the Church.

⁷Paul J. Achtemeier, An Introduction to the New Hermeneutic (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1969), p. 14.

Chapter I

BIBLICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE CHURCH

Relating the truth of a common experience is a vital and historic function of the Christian Church. Drawing from Hebrew law that two or more witnesses are needed to establish the truth of a testimony (Deut.19:15), Jesus is depicted as saying "In your law it is written that the testimony of two men is true" (John 8:17). The need for corporate participation in proclamation is a major impetus for the Church's being.

The English word "Church" is derived from the Greek term "kuriakon," the "Lord's House," or the building for Christian worship. But equating the building with the collected believers did not occur until long after the first century. The actual New Testament word for Church is Ecclesia which means an "assembly of people, and cannot mean a building."¹ Henceforth in this work, Church and Ecclesia will be interchangeable, with meaning being that of the assembly of believers. This body is gathered together to share the truth of a common experience; the encounter of the proclaimed one, Jesus the Christ.

¹Alan Richardson (ed.), A Theological Word Book of the Bible (New York: Macmillan, 1951), p. 46.

The Judaistic Roots of the Church

The concept of Church has its origins in the Old Testament idea of the Children of Israel. There seems to be a general consensus among Christian theologians that it would be impossible to understand what the Church is without a profound sense of appreciation of the Old Testament viewpoint that the Hebrew people were the elect of God. Through covenant and the reception of the law, the Jews were witnesses to Yahweh's revelation of Himself, therefore they became the Chosen People.

The Chosen People notion of the Jews began with God's covenant with Abraham (Gen. 12:2, 3, 7). As the people of the Exodus and as the inheritors of the land of milk and honey, Canaan, the Chosen People concept continued to persist (Ex. 15:1-2, 13, 16; Josh. 1:1-9).

Generations later when Jesus was born, as tradition has it, in the city and of the seed of David, it was He who was promised to be the culmination of all the chosen people of God. When Matthew depicts Peter as proclaiming "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matt. 16:16), he was referring directly to the Old Testament prophecy that there would one day come a Promised One who would be a great Deliverer (Jer. 23:5, 6; Isa. 7:10-17) of the Chosen People. Thus this Christ, the Messiah, was deeply rooted in the traditions of the Old Testament.

In the Old Testament there are two words which are used to signify a gathering of worshippers. They are 'edhah (congregation) and qahal (assembly). "'Edhah, the older word, comes from a root meaning 'to appoint,' hence, 'a company assembled together by appointment.'"

"Qahal comes from a root meaning 'to call,' and originally meant the assembling of the community for counsel, or the mustering of men of military age for war."² Later in the formulation of the LXX, the translators of the Pentateuch translated both 'edhah and qahal as ecclesia, but later reserved synagogue for 'edhah and ecclesia for qahal.

It is evident that Ecclesia was agreed upon among Christians to mean the body of assembled believers within a few years after Pentecost. The significance of the word Ecclesia for these early Christians seemed to be most accurately characterized by the peculiar nature of the assembly as the new true Chosen People of God. This Ecclesia is called together to hear and share together the proclamation of the resurrected one, Jesus the Christ.

The Jews considered themselves to be the Chosen People of God, but in the New Testament, it is those who follow Jesus Christ who consider themselves to have usurped the Jewish position, and claim for themselves the title of the chosen ones of God. Peter begins his epistle "To the exiles of the Dispersion" (I Peter 1:1) and goes on to address Christians who make up the Church throughout the world as the "chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people" (I Peter 2:9a). Peter's proclamation in this section appears to be based upon the concept that the Church, the assembly of believers in the Lordship of Jesus, are God's chosen, unique people.

Paul refers to the Church as "the Israel of God" (Gal. 6:16). He develops the idea that Christians are the chosen people in chapters

²Ibid.

9-11 in the Epistle to the Romans. In this section he maintains that becoming one of God's chosen people is not restricted to those who are physical descendants of Abraham; membership in this assembly of the chosen is open to all who are spiritual descendants of Abraham, whom Paul calls, "the children of promise" (Rom. 9:8).

Paul seems to be particularly fond of referring to "men of faith who are the sons of Abraham" (Gal. 3:7) and that in God's promise to Abraham ("In you shall all nations be blessed") the gentiles who also experienced the resurrection of Jesus were also included (Gal. 3:8). Paul proclaims that in Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female (Gal. 3:28). "And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise" (Gal. 3:29). Galatians emphasizes that the Church has replaced the old Israel as the new Israel, the chosen assembly of God.

These New Testament teachings develop the concept that the assembly of believers, the Church of Jesus Christ, grew out of the Old Testament idea of a chosen people of God. When Paul quotes the prophet Hosea "Those who were not my people I will call 'my people'" (Rom. 9:25a) he is continuing to portray the image that all who have experienced the risen Christ are the chosen ones of God, even those who are not Jews. Therefore the new Israel is comprised of all manner of people simply by the proclamation of their faith in Jesus Christ.

Thus far, the roots of the Church in the Old Testament concept of the Children of Israel has been shown. Now it is in order to examine the concept of Church as it is found in the Synoptic Gospels, Acts, the Fourth Gospel, and further in the Epistles of Paul.

The Synoptic Gospels' Concept of Church

The term Ecclesia is not found in Mark or Luke, and it only occurs twice in Matthew's Gospel (Matt. 16:18; 18:17). The words attributed to Jesus in Matt. 16:18 seem to show that the intention of Christ is to construct the Church here on earth ("on this rock I will build my Church"). The other reference to Church may indicate that Matthew wanted to show that the Church was in existence while Jesus' ministry was being conducted. When Jesus states, ". . . if he refuses to listen even to the Church . . . , " He is dealing with a matter of discipline and appears to be instructing members of an existing Church on how to deal with a fellow member who has gone astray. In all probability however, these are later insertions by Matthew to give credence to his concept of the authority of the Church.

The members of this first Church are assumed by the author to be the disciples which Jesus called (Matt. 4:18-25, 9:9-13; similar passage in Mark 1:16-20, 2:13-17; Luke 5:1-11, 27-32). There is debate as to the point in time when the followers of Jesus actually became the Ecclesia. Some maintain that it was at the time of disciples' calling by Jesus; others see the Church coming into being at the first sharing of bread and wine in the upper room. Still others, like Rudolf Bultmann, maintain that the Church came into being only after the death of Jesus and by and through the proclamation of the kerygmatic message. None is definite, nor can any be proved or disproved. The crucial point is that the Church somehow came into being by the common proclamation of the disciples and this is both explicit and implicit throughout the Synoptics.

The implicit nature of the proclaiming in the first three Gospels is inferred by select word images and phrases. Jesus calls His disciples "sheep," the "flock which will be scattered" (Matt. 26:31). Luke records Jesus as saying "fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (Luke 12:32). When Jesus says, "God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham" (Matt. 3:9), He appears to be speaking of the new chosen people, which is the Church described earlier. These few examples from the Synoptics are intended to show that the Church was very important to the writers of these Gospels. Often though, Church was implied, rather than explicitly stated.³

The Church in the Acts of the Apostles

Luke assumes that the Ecclesia was born or came into being at Pentecost (Acts 2). It seems that Luke wants to depict that the disciples were not ready to function as the church until after this event. By the time of Pentecost, the crucial events of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection had been consumed and digested into the lives of the twelve so that when they were confronted and filled by the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:4) they were given the impetus to form the Church. A period of indecision and fear had come to an end. Peter publically and proudly proclaimed in the city where Jesus only recently had been condemned to

³Paul's concept of the Church as the Body of Christ does not directly appear in any of the Synoptics. Although it is not stated explicitly, there is reference to the importance of the Body (Mark 14:22; Matt. 26:26; Luke 22:19).

However, because the Synoptics deal with the earthly ministry of Jesus, perhaps it is reasonable to expect that one will not find as full a development of Church as is found in Paul's Epistles.

death, that true Good News had come to the people; God had raised Jesus up from the dead. He preached boldly that "God has made Him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified" (Acts 2:36b). It is reported that thousands responded to Peter's proclamation, repented, and were added on that day to the growing Church (Acts 2:41). Later many others were added as they too experienced the Good News, "those who were being saved" (Acts 2:47).

Sermons delivered to a specified company, or on impromptu occasions to casual listeners, occupy a substantial portion of the Book of Acts. Examples of these sermons are Peter's addresses to the people in Solomon's Portico (Acts 3:12-26) and to Cornelius (Acts 10:34-43); Stephen's address before his accusers (Acts 7:2-53) and Paul's statement to Agrippa (Acts 26:1-29). Even the sermons which are defenses made by the speakers before governmental and religious authorities are proclamations of the Gospel. Luke depicts Paul as moving King Agrippa to say "In a short time you think to make me a Christian!" (Acts 26:28). The sharing of the Gospel by means of proclamation seems to have particular importance in the form of preaching for Luke.

Ecclesia is used often in Acts. Examples are Acts 5:11; 7:38; 8:1, 3 and 9:31. A varied use of Ecclesia is demonstrated which includes the singular "Church in Jerusalem" (Acts 8:1) and the plural references to Israel in the wilderness (Acts 7:38) and the "Church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria" (Acts 9:3). The significance of "Church" in Acts can be seen in the fact that the Church emerges and expands first as the assembly of believers in Jerusalem, and then it spreads throughout the Roman world. Any notion that this Ecclesia of God could remain a party or a sect of Judaism isolated in

Jerusalem most surely ended with the stoning of Stephen and the persecution of the Jerusalem Church.

The Chosen Assembly in the Fourth Gospel

Ecclesia is not found in the Fourth Gospel, but the existence of a chosen group of "true believers" is graphically illustrated. Although John does not describe the Christian community by such images as "people of God" or "Body of Christ," the figure of the "vine and the branches" (John 15:1-11) seems an intentional illustration of the relationship of Christ to His followers. In fact there is much similarity to the Deutero-Pauline Body of Christ image wherein the relationship of Christ as the head of the Body (Col. 1:17-20; 2:1-5; Eph. 4:15) compares to the idea of vine to its branches. Other examples in the Fourth Gospel of the relationship of Christ to the Chosen People are like a door to the sheepfold, and the good shepherd to his flock (John 10:7-18). John uses metaphors to describe Jesus' meaning; of Jesus' providing the means of life and love that all persons need.

Love is central to the nature of the Church in the Fourth Gospel:

For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. For God sent the Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through Him (John 3:16-17).

John stresses the need for the Ecclesia to be a fellowship which shares this love (John 13:34-35, 15:12-17).

Those who have been called to share in this love were not brought together as were the disciples of the Synoptic Gospels. In John's Gospel, the disciples decide on their own to follow Jesus

(John 1:35-51). Thus in John, becoming a follower of Jesus seems to involve ample exercise of personal freedom on the one hand, while on the other, the strong influence of Jesus actually issuing a call is strongly emphasized; "you did not choose me, but I chose you" (John 15:16a).

Jesus promises the disciples that the Paraclete (Counselor, Spirit) will come to them after He is gone (John 16:7). In a post-resurrection appearance, Jesus says to the disciples, "Receive the Holy Spirit" (John 20:22b), and this Holy Spirit is sent to comfort those who are the followers of Jesus. Those who are the beneficiaries of this Spirit belong to Jesus. In the priestly prayer Jesus states "I am not praying for the world, but for all those whom thou hast given me, for they are thine" (John 17:9b).

John's Gospel develops the idea of the Church as community which is intimately connected with Christ and belongs to God. Love must be the essential ingredient in the nature of the Church which the Paraclete proclaims in the assembled group of followers. These are main Johannean contributions to the idea of Church. However no formal structure for the Church as an institution appears to be present.

The Church in the Pauline Epistles

Paul employs the term Ecclesia often throughout his various letters in the New Testament.⁴ Primary examples are Rom. 16:1, I Cor.

⁴The following letters are assumed to be Paul's. I Thessalonians, Galatians, I Corinthians, II Corinthians, Romans, Philippians and Philemon. II Thessalonians, Colossians, Ephesians, and the Pastoral letters, I Timothy, II Timothy, and Titus are accredited to the Pauline School. See Wayne A. Meeks (ed.), The Writings of St. Paul (New York: Norton, 1972), p. vii and following.

1:12, II Cor. 11:8, Gal. 1:13. Paul writes to individual Churches "To the Church of God at Corinth" (I Cor. 1:2) and he speaks of Churches as a plural or corporate sense "All the Churches of the Gentiles give thanks" (Rom. 16:4). It seems that the Ecclesia for Paul is to be found in its wholeness in every company of believers, however small they might be in number (I Cor. 1:2; II Cor. 1:1).

When Paul speaks of the Church as "of God" (I Cor. 10:32; Gal. 1:13) and "in Christ" (I Thes. 2:14; Gal. 1:22) he seems to be maintaining that the Church is the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy; this assembly of witnesses of the Good News have replaced the Jews as the Chosen Children of God. For Paul, to be a member of a Church is an indication that one is called apart, and therefore that individual is a unique and even special person. The Ecclesia is therefore a collection of such persons.

The Deutero-Pauline epistles also employ the concept of Ecclesia. In Colossians 1:24 and Ephesians 1:22-23 Ecclesia becomes the Body of Christ. In the latter passage, the author, in speaking of Christ, says that God has "put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the Church, which is His body, the fullness of him who fills all in all." "Body of Christ" is used here to develop a metaphor for understanding the nature of the Church. This same image is found in Paul's own writings in Romans 12:4-8 and I Corinthians 12:12-26.

There are many more images employed in the New Testament which are used to describe the assembly of believers. Some examples are "The Bride of Christ" (Ephesians 5:22-31), "Ambassadors" (Ephesians 6:20), "The Boat" (John 21:18; Mark 4:1), "The New Creation" (II Corinthians

5:17) and "The Faithful" (Colossians 1:2). While Paul himself uses a number of images to portray the nature of the Church, the focus of this section shall be upon the concept of "Body of Christ."

The Body of Christ

It is Paul and the Pauline School which developed the image of the "Body of Christ" to the fullest of all the New Testament writers. Others allude to this metaphor (Mark 14:22; John 2:19-21; Hebrews 10:5, 13:3, 11-12; I Peter 2:24) but it is not nearly as developed. It is important to approach the phrase with the awareness that it cannot be expected to be taken as a complete and comprehensive definition of the nature of the Church. One must avoid the creation of a position on the nature of the "Body of Christ" which is too restricted or which goes beyond what Paul himself intended to say.

Paul's metaphor, "Body of Christ" projects a conception of corporate wholeness. Corporate wholeness means that membership in the Body of Christ binds men together in both a physical union and in a spiritual sense. Individuality becomes secondary to the corporate whole, the "Body of Christ." Thus, man is with man and with Christ and all are transformed into a corporate wholeness which is manifest as the Ecclesia, the Church. Paul's own Hebrew background which stems from the nation of Israel, often regarded as a corporate whole (Ps. 33:12), probably influenced his use of Body metaphor. It is one "Body," a unified whole, which Paul describes particularly in I Corinthians 12. Ernst Kasemann states:

The apostle uses the expression "the body of Christ" because he really means to point out the structural characteristics of a body; that is why he makes a detailed comparison in I Corinthians

12:14ff . . . the comparison brings out the reality which is intended through the concrete application of the statement of identity to the life of the Christian community. The exalted Christ really has an earthly body, and believers with their whole being are actually incorporated into it. . . .⁵

The Body of Christ is no mere metaphor; it is actual participation in the risen Christ which makes the Christian as a member of the Body to have a special relationship with God. As the Children of Israel shared the common whole of the nation of Israel, so too do Christians share in Christ. The idea of a body image expresses a close kinship, a fellowship of faith. The Body of Christ is the Ecclesia of God, gathered by Him into Christ. Christians share Christ, His life, death and resurrection, His teachings and His spirit. It is through the continuing presence and power of the Holy Spirit that the Ecclesia is what it is; the common whole of those who participate in and with the risen Lord.

Membership in the Body of Christ

The term "body" in Greek during Paul's time conveyed the idea of "unity" as illustrated by the image of the human body in which all members co-operate. In Paul's Body of Christ image the concept emerges in which the Ecclesia lives exclusively by Christ's sacrifice and ultimate resurrection. It does this in a relationship of mutual love among the members of the Body who serve one another. Membership in this Body is referred to as participation in the Koinonia, the fellowship of love.

For the connotation of "koinonia" is that "the spirit of God is forth going into, and present in, every relationship within the

⁵Ernst Käsemann, Perspectives on Paul (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969), p. 104.

community." Thus it signifies that every relationship in the Christian community participates in God and God in it, whether it be the relationship of person to person, or of each to all, or all to each; while the whole community as a whole participates in God and God in it. Thus "koinonia" is by its nature a community intimately indwelt by the Spirit.⁶

The implication for this kind of intimate fellowship is that no person can be a Christian alone, in isolation from the corporate whole of the Body. It seems to be beyond comprehension to call anyone a Christian who is not a member of the Church, the Body of Christ. All who call themselves Christians share in Christ's life, death, and resurrection; all are baptized into Him, receive new life and taste eternity by means of the Lord's Supper. The life of Christ flows in all its members and reaches the individual Christian both directly and through other Christians in Ecclesia. Thus it is impossible for one Christian to separate him or herself from the Church without also separating him or herself from the resurrected Lord.

The necessity for participation in the wholeness of the Body of Christ is further demonstrated in that God has revealed himself to humans by and through the Incarnation. A person does not experience the risen Christ merely by believing in a particular creed or dogma. It is as one knows the Son of God within the fellowship of the Church that one ceases to be "lost." In knowing the Christ and communing with Him, one is also brought into communion with the humanness of the world. And it is participation in the human condition that enables one to be a Christian and to participate in the Body of Christ. Fellowship with Christ and fellowship with fellow humans is inseparable; one cannot

⁶Lewis J. Sherrill, The Gift of Power (New York: Macmillan, 1955), p. 50.

claim to have communion with God if that communion does not extend to his fellow man.

Membership in the Body of Christ means nurturing relationships which are experienced within the fellowship of the Ecclesia. These nurturing relationships make possible the bond of love which holds the Body together. It is God who in Christ gives and sustains loving human relationships both with Himself and between persons within the Ecclesia. As the individual encounters both God and man in the Church, he or she should grow to "walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us" (Ephesians 5:2a).

Paul's metaphor of the Body seems to emphasize the importance of every part, every appendage of the Body itself. If individual members with their varieties of gifts are all equally important to the Body in its corporate sense, then it can be assumed that members are equally important to each other when the implementation of spiritual gifts occurs (I Corinthians 12:4-31). For example, one who proclaims the Word of God needs others to hear the proclamation. As interdependent members of one Body, the individuals need each other, and a strong part of this mutual need is the physical presence of one another so that interaction is possible. The implication of Paul's teaching for the Church then and now seems to be regular, active participation in the fellowship, proclamation and other forms of mutual ministry and worship in the Body. A live Body and a living member of that Body will evidence this through the mutual involvement of each with the other.

Chapter II

THE CHURCH AS THE COMMUNITY OF PROCLAMATION

The Church has been shown to be the new Israel of God, deeply rooted in the tradition of Judaism, and the primary participant in the New Covenant brought about by the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. As the Ecclesia, Christians have been called by God to be members of Christ's Body. This body of believers was called into community by God in Christ and men and women responded by banding together. As Christ's Body now representing Him in the World, the Church must function as a unit with the emphasis on interdependence rather than individuality. Christians are called to be members of the Body with one another. This Ecclesia of God participates in the ministry of Christ and the work of the kingdom which He proclaimed. Sharing the Good News of the gospel so that others might hear and learn of Christ, encounter Him in the message, and become members of His Body is the mission of the Church today even as it was in the first century.

The New Testament indicates that persons who hear the Gospel and claim membership in the Body must be actively involved within the local Church. In relating to others of the Body, the individual also relates to Christ, who is the source of faith and life for Christians. Therefore, to be a Christian, according to the New Testament, one must belong to the Church. One cannot be a Christian alone in isolation

from Christ's Body. This teaching is implicit in everything that has been examined on the development of the Church in the New Testament.

This view that man needs to belong and to participate actively in the Body of Christ is essential. Based on this concept, attendance at worship services and participation in activities with others of the Body, can be assumed to be a valid expectation for the individual believer. In a day when it seems that many persons have de-emphasized the importance of participation in public worship and verbalization of their faith, it is critical to re-examine the roles of worship and proclamation in the Body of Christ.

Corporate worship draws attention to the oneness of the Body of Christ. A vital part of worship occurs when God speaks and the members of the Body respond to God's Word. It is language which makes possible the proclamation and hearing of the Word of God in the Body of Christ. Because the proclamations and hearing of the Word in the form of preaching and teaching are but one aspect of Christian corporate worship, the role of worship in the Church will be examined.

The Place of Worship in the Body of Christ

Corporate worship in the Old Testament centered on God; the primary concern was to Glorify God and to celebrate His presence. Enthusiasm for God was dominant with other benefits to the nation and the individual secondary. The ultimate manifestation of true worship was obedience to the commands of God. The idea of a sacred place as a focal point of worship (whether mountain, portable shrine, or Temple) was a constant and prominent aspect of worship in Israel. These sacred places were the shrines of the Holy, the places where

God made Himself known; they were places where His Word was heard with great clarity and the people responded to it.

Characteristically, worship at holy places was a celebration before the almighty God. A worshipper brought tithes, first fruits, and sacrificial offerings to present to God. There was also a great deal of singing led by a chazan which added the beauty of music to the spoken word. (Musical instruments such as cymbals and horns were also employed.) There was also dancing and proclamation in the form of oracles (oracles of peace and assurance, etc.). The ritual of worship also included the use of incense and the wearing of rings and other decorative jewelry. Another element of worship was silence (Ps. 4:4, 46:10). The Psalmist gives further insight into the purpose of worship when he says that he desires to dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of his life "to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in His temple" (Ps. 27:4).¹ This was the tradition of worship of the children of God in the Old Testament. This was the heritage of Judaism within which Christianity was born and from which the Church of God in the New Testament emerged.

In general, the worship of the New Testament Ecclesia was characterized by its focus on baptism and the Lord's Supper. But implicit with this emphasis is the whole concept of proclamation. The words of institution, which state that the wine and bread are the Blood and Body of Christ, are proclamations of the Church. So, too, is one baptized in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost. The dominant

¹The above material was derived from G. Henton Davies, "Worship in the Old Testament," in The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962), LV, 879-883.

element of all faith, all worship, is the proclamations which accompany the specific acts. Worship includes public prayer, psalmody, scripture reading, preaching, instruction and private devotions. In addition to these elements were the special observances of ordination, visitation of the sick, funeral services, and weekly and annual days of fasting and celebration.

Since Christianity has deep roots in Judaism, it is natural that many of the practices of worship common in the old faith would be carried over and adapted into the "new." At first the main distinction of the Christian sect within Judaism was their common meal (Acts 2:46). It is assumed that in both public and private worship, they continued to observe Jewish modes of worship. However, when the Christians were barred from temple and synagogue worship, and with the inclusion of the uncircumcised, the Church developed its own specific forms of worship.

The familiar forms of Judaism were motivations for the new modes of Christian worship, but the Judaistic acts were greatly altered to accentuate the Christian message. What the Ecclesia inherited from the temple worship, for example, was a way of expressing the meaning of Christ's passion as a sacrifice, and in which the Christians were provided the means of having the Good News. Thus, the Lord's Supper and the adjoining words of institution make up the proclamation (I Cor. 11:26) of the sacrifice which had been offered once and for all (Heb. 9:11-14, 23-28, 10:1-10). It was proclamation of this act that gave it credence to the assembly of believers.

The influence of the synagogue (the local center of worship in post-exilic Judaism) was much expressed in the Church's emphasis on the

proclamation of the Word. Scripture reading, preaching, psalmody, and public prayer were part of the weekly Christian worship. In this practice there were both similarity and contrast with Judaism. Most of the contrast came in the content and in the changed order of usage for the common forms.²

It is important to demonstrate the influences of the worship practices of Old Testament Judaism upon the community of believers of the New Testament. While there were other influences upon primitive Christian worship, general similarities to Israel's Temple and Synagogue worship must be emphasized. Even to this day, Christians in their Church sing hymns and psalms, they use musical instruments (such as organs, horns, drums, stringed-instruments, etc.), they dance, wear regal robes, use incense and observe periods of silence. However it is the power of language as the agent of proclamation which is the common element of these worship traditions. The reality of the Holy was made manifest through the use of language.

The crucial importance of corporate worship in the life of the Body of Christ grows out of the very nature of the Church itself. The concept of the people of God called together by God to be one Body with many members, yet one in Christ through the power and unifying work of the Holy Spirit, is clearly expressed in the experience of the people gathered together to worship. Whereas the individuality of the believer is expressed in personal and private worship, it is the oneness of the Body of believers that is expressed by the community of believers. The

²For further development see C. C. Richardson, "Christian Worship in New Testament Times," in The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, IV, 883-889.

unity of the Body is seen through the simultaneous offering of praise to God and lovingly sharing the Good News with those who would hear. This brings about a state of oneness, and this oneness is enhanced by the individual's exposure to the power of the Holy Spirit as He moves through the gathered Body revealing God's purposes. It is in the gathering of this community of worship that the believer encounters the reality of God, and hence His call to personal commitment in and through the Body. It is in worship that the individual believer confesses his need of divine guidance in life and of his inability to live life alone, apart from God and other believers. Through worship, the believer proclaims his or her faith in the risen Christ, who makes Himself known in His Body.

Proclamation's Place in Worship

Perhaps the most noted form of explicit proclamation is preaching. It is "A public proclamation of the good news: God has accomplished a work of salvation in Jesus Christ and offers a new life to those who believe."³ C. H. Dodd drew a distinct line between preaching (kerygma) and teaching (didache). He states:

The New Testament writers draw a clear distinction between preaching and teaching. The distinction is preserved alike in Gospels, Acts, Epistles, and Apocalypse, and must be considered characteristic of early Christian usage in general.⁴

Dodd goes on to say that teaching is primarily ethical instruction, while preaching is the means of salvation (I Cor. 1:21). However

³P. H. Menoud, "Preaching," in The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, III, 868-869.

⁴C. H. Dodd, The Apostolic Preaching and Its Developments (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), p. 7.

both preaching and teaching are integral parts of the proclamation of the Church. In the process of the Church's development, teaching and preaching finally grew together, so that even Dodd states:

Much of our preaching in Church at the present day would not have been recognized by the early church as "kerygma." It is teaching, or exhortation ("paraklesis"), or it is what they called "homilis," that is, the more or less informal discussion of various aspects of Christian life and thought, addressed to a congregation already established in the faith.⁵

Proclamation conveys what God is saying, whether it be ethical instruction or the words of salvation, to those who would hear. True proclamation of the Word can and should contain both.

When one examines the New Testament, one finds that Jesus emphatically proclaimed "The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand: Repent, and believe in the gospel" (Mark 1:15). The belief in the gospel which Jesus requires is essentially experiencing good news and accrediting it to Him as Lord and Christ. The realization of the kingdom was begun in Christ and continues in process toward its ultimate consummation. The proclamation of the kingdom, therefore, is also proclamation of Jesus Christ as Lord, who brought it into being by His life, death and resurrection.

The early Apostle's proclamation was a call to believe and be saved; it is essentially proclamation of Christ and God's unique action in Him. The essence of Paul's proclamation was refined by Dodd:

The prophecies are fulfilled, and the new Age is inaugurated
by the coming of Christ.
He was born of the seed of David.
He died according to the Scriptures, to deliver us out of the
present evil age.

⁵ Ibid., p. 8.

He was buried.
 He rose on the third day according to the Scriptures.
 He is exalted at the right hand of God, as Son of God and
 Lord of quick and dead.
 He will come again as Judge and Saviour of men.⁶

Paul's proclamation, geared primarily to gentile audiences, focused on Christ. Paul's letters contain many teachings about what the Christian life should be like. Perhaps the most famous example is the exhortation to love in I Corinthians 13.

In modern times, Christian proclamation outside the community of believers seems to be limited to electronic media's mass evangelisms, and "crusades." The Church's proclamation within its corporate worship services is a combination of preaching of the gospel and a teaching exhortation. Proclamation is the one element which uses language as the means of communicating the reality of the Word of God.

Proclamation and Language

Proclamation of the worshipping Church could simply offer a symbolic perspective on the reality of Christian experience. The function of proclamation is to bring the Body into a common wholeness which transcends the individuality of each separate member and affirms the reality of the one Christ, of which each is but a part. It is important that the participants acknowledge the whole which is greater than each member. The proclamation unites the members into a common level of experience. They do not necessarily share the exact same experience, but the possibility of their sharing a common level overcomes their separation into active and passive roles; they actively participate

⁶Ibid., p. 17.

together in experiencing what the proclamation creates for each of them. This implies a great deal of power and assurance that God has sanctified proclamation because it is an essential aspect of the worship of the Church. Therefore language itself should be examined.

Chapter III

THE NEW HERMENEUTIC'S PERSPECTIVE ON LANGUAGE¹

Language is greater than that which man can conceive.² This is not to say, however, that language cannot be examined objectively; it simply implies that language cannot be limited to an objective definition. There is much validity in looking at language as objective reality, as a means by which communication is achieved. Dictionaries and grammatical rules aid in the acceptance of a common usage, but all too often these tools are used solely as restrictive measures which stifle rather than enrich.³ Defining language solely as an objective instrument of communication which can be subdivided into words and grammatical rules by which error is avoided denies the concept that

¹In this section of the project I am indebted particularly to Gerhard Ebeling and much of the material is a paraphrase and an elaboration of his thoughts. I am deeply indebted to his pioneering work in the whole area of language, Hermeneutic and the Word of God.

²Language "is more than words or even content or words . . . it is more than sentences composed of subject and predicate." Robert W. Funk, Language, Hermeneutic, and Word of God (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), p. 2.

³"It is clearly inadequate to tie language down to an objective definition based on a technical system of signs and rules. . . . To restrict oneself to the way language is presented in dictionaries and grammars, which at first sight present a complete inventory of it, does not do justice to the wide ranging phenomenon of language. Language must be sought out where it is used and experienced as a living utterance and a necessity of life." Gerhard Ebeling, Introduction to a Theological Theory of Language (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971), p. 88-89.

language, the means of communication, is separate from man. Language has essentially a hermeneutic⁴ function.

Hermeneutic is derived from the Greek term "hermenia" which means to "interpret," "to expound," "to explain."⁵ In essence the function of "hermeneutic" is to convey understanding. With understanding as the goal, interpretation, exposition, and explanation serve as the means by which understanding is made possible. Man comprehends and articulates only by and through language, in fact language is the only means by which understanding is possible because man is only capable of thinking in terms of and by means of language.⁶ Because of this, language and understanding are so intertwined that when one

⁴"Hermeneutic," rather than "hermeneutics," is used because "under German influence, the singular has gained ground in English usage, as in the case of dialectic, dogmatic, ethic, metaphysic, static." J. M. Robinson and J. B. Cobb (eds.), The New Hermeneutic (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), p. x.

⁵Johannes Behm, "ερμηνευω," in Gerhard Kittel (ed.), Theological Dictionary of the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), II, 661. The connecting link of these three divergent definitions is ". . . a concern for the understanding 'of' language 'by' language, that is the achievement of understanding, either by a statement which is to the point, an explanation which makes the meaning clear, or an accurate translation. The same intention is present in each case: to enable language to achieve its full effect in carrying out its function. Thus (hermeneutic ed.) does not set out to add anything to language, but only to remove what prevents it from being effective. It tries to repair the breakdowns which interfere, either within language itself or outside it, with the process of conveying understanding, which language itself is meant to bring about." Ebeling, p. 157.

⁶The "Process of thought is so much a process of language that it does not attain its goal until it has reached the point of definition in language. . . . Wrestling for verbal expression is always, therefore, a wrestling to understand the substance of the matter which is intended to utter." Ebeling, p. 119.

attempts to separate the two, reality can neither be grasped nor communicated.⁷

The reciprocity of language and understanding must be seen in connection with and tempered by that which is "real," and this reality transcends both language and understanding to make itself known.⁸

Because language has the ability to expose the nature of the reality of the subject which it conveys, it in a sense actually contains that which is conveyed.⁹ It must be realized that it is not complete nor fully understood reality which language conveys, but only the interpretation, exposition, and explanation of that reality. It is crucial to bear in mind that it is finite humans who deal with

⁷"Language and understanding give birth to each other; they also hold each other captive." Funk, p. 4. "Language goes dead when it forecloses rather than discloses understanding. On the other hand, understanding remains a not-knowing until language comes to its rescue. And both of them linger in limbo until the 'real' breaks through the limitations set by the reciprocal dependence of language and understanding." Funk, p. 6.

⁸"Reality is hence not at all simply what is. . . . Rather the real is only that which can become present as language (even though this be in recollection!). What is now unutterable seems on the contrary to be unreal, which does not mean it is or was impossible. Thus reality has not yet been fully defined when we locate it only in the context of beings, but rather as a 'category' it is even more basically built into the nature of another realm, that of 'language.'" Zum Hermeneutischen Problem in der Theologie, Gesammelte Aufsätze I, p. 115, Hermeneutik, p. 130, in Robinson and Cobb, p. 55-56.

⁹"Language is related to its subject in that it always in some degree contains the thing with which it is concerned." Ebeling, p. 101. Ebeling also states that the "specific function of language . . . and so its necessity . . . becomes clear only when the subject with which it is concerned is not recognizable or present . . . and only becomes present through the utterances of language. Thus making present the past and the future and bringing to light what is hidden are the characteristic tasks of language . . . language brings about an encounter with the subject itself." Ebeling, p. 101-102.

language, at the same time however, language is the only means by which these same finite humans can deal with that which is incomprehensible but which cannot be ignored.¹⁰

It is only through and by means of language that the understanding of reality is possible; therefore man cannot conceive of anything which he cannot articulate.¹¹ If man can neither conceive nor articulate something, then he cannot comprehend it. This does not mean that reality exists only if man can articulate its existence; on the contrary, what this indicates is that man can only learn of reality by means of language.

Because man is finite, the interpretation, exposition, and explanation of reality which is understood and conveyed by and through language varies from one person to the next.¹² This is why careful scrutiny must be employed when attempting to discern reality.

However diligently one may strive honestly to convey reality, there is often a discrepancy between what one intends to say, and what one actually says. In speaking, a one-sided view is often, even usually, presented. Frequently unintentional, it happens simply because

¹⁰"It is an indispensable condition of any ability to encounter what is incomprehensible and cannot be taken for granted, the only basis on which we can come to terms with it and so extend the range of what is accessible to our understanding." Ebeling, p. 158-159.

¹¹"The question whether there is any reality apart from language is to be answered in the negative." Funk, p. 51.

¹²"The idea that apprehension of the subject, the perception itself, is as it were a naked fact not clothed with language until later, is as false as the hope that one can penetrate to the pure truth by removing the outer veils of language." Ebeling, p. 103. "Reflection upon language can only take place by means of language itself. This corresponds to the fact that in all endeavors to obtain knowledge, man cannot escape from the conditions of humanity." Ebeling, p. 161.

the speaker has not sufficiently thought through what he or she intends to say. Finding the right words to articulate a concept can be compared to the pangs of birth, for the concept is struggling to be born into the world by means of the only medium by which it is able: language. Failure to express oneself in language is not that the concept does not exist, but that there is a super-abundance of material which is surrounding the concept and is keeping it from being clarified and articulated. When the right combination of clarification and articulation comes about, understanding is achieved and the concept is brought alive by and through language. This concept which is brought alive is always understood in relation to previously understood reality. It is experience of past encounters which forms perceptions.¹³ In other words man learns "that" and from "that" which already existed.

Language existed prior to man.

For the lament as language no longer belongs to lostness, but rather supplies man with the plus that as the essence of language reminds him that he belongs to a communication . . . nearness to the power at work in language prior to all human participation. FOR IT IS NOT TRUE THAT MAN HAS GIVEN BIRTH TO LANGUAGE (cap. Ed.). That man has made language a means of usurped existence merely proves that man is accustomed to exist in daily life having missed the mark.¹⁴

This is demonstrated by the fact that each individual has learned a language which was in existence prior to his or her ability to speak or write it. (Establishing a totally independent language would be

¹³"The world which is invested in language is largely inherited." Funk, p. 51.

¹⁴Fuchs, "Hermeneutik," p. 63, English translation in Robinson and Cobb, p. 50.

virtually impossible.) From infancy one learns to speak an existing language, a "Mother Tongue."

When a new language is attempted, it is first translated into the Mother Tongue; in other words the new language is dealt with in terms of the original. For this reason a second language rarely replaces a Mother Tongue. The Mother Tongue, as does a flesh and blood mother, gives nourishment to the youngster; it initiates him into the ways of the community and gives sustenance to the new member as he grows and matures. This is another reason why a second language rarely replaces the Mother Tongue. Other languages are learned, but it is only through translation and change of the Mother Tongue that the new language has meaning.¹⁵ However the problem of translation is not restricted to the change from one language to another; even within a single language, a great many sub-languages may exist. For example, physicists speak a technical language within their particular circles; so do those in the various fields of athletics, such as football with terms like "punt," "red-dog," "blitz," and "field goal." Each sub-language has its own specific terms and phrases which have unique meaning. One has to share the understood meaning of the words of a sub-language to share a common understanding. But even within sub-languages, it is language by which humans understand

¹⁵"Translation is an art; but even when it is done in masterly fashion, it is still a change. For what is spoken has been thought in terms of a specific language. To put into another language means to think it through afresh." Gerhard Ebeling, The Nature of Faith (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1961), p. 188.

one another and communicate with one another.¹⁶

Language is the means by which reality is understood and the experience of this reality is communicated. But the understanding of reality is most divergent. There is a great deal of ambiguity in perceived reality. For instance the time element in dealing with understood reality plays an important role in perception. Whether it is before lunch, after a car accident, or during a final examination, when language is implemented greatly affects the understanding of reality.¹⁷

However it is only when language is set free of the present moment that it can be free to be entirely committed to man and at the same time completely demanding of him. Only those words which pertain to the present moment can be truly applicable, however one must be conscious not to be taken in by a "with-it-ness" which worships that which is in vogue and refuses to challenge the status quo. One is free to speak, to make use of language, yet one is responsible for the incredible power which language generates; it is the power of life and growth. For as long as one makes use of language, one is participating in the process of life.

¹⁶For this same reason, it is very difficult to stand back from language sufficiently to criticize it; for language is structured to be taken for granted. Examination of and reflection on language can only be done by language itself. What this means is that man cannot escape the language that formed and nurtured him.

¹⁷One should not be ". . . wholly subject to the power of time, but in one respect or another break the bonds imposed by its own time and set itself free from its imprisonment in the present moment." Ebeling, Introduction to Theological Theory of Language, p. 207.

Language takes one beyond mere individuality and makes possible corporate identity in community. It enables one to participate in and with a group of other individuals who are bound together in community. With but few obscure exceptions, every person is not only an individual, but is also a member of some community. Language is the bond of that community.¹⁸

It would be most difficult for an individual to create and use his or her own language; language is the means of communication between individuals. It is by and through language that the individual is brought into the life of the community and is able to take part in that corporate whole. The ability to make vocal sounds is a biological phenomenon, but language itself is determined by speaking to and with others, by participating in community. Language is taught by language; language is learned by language; it is by and through language that the whole possibility of corporate wholeness in community is established. Each child born into a community is able to communicate by means of the nurturing, bonding, Mother Tongue language, the cohesive bond of community.

Because an infant learns to speak primarily by mimicking, language is learned at the basic level of conditioned response. Even as adults, most language is continued to be used at this level. Almost

¹⁸It is acknowledged that language can also be lethal to the life of the community. Words said with anger or hate can destroy the relationship of the individuals in a community. This potentially lethal nature mandates that language must be used judiciously. The potentiality of this lethality causes people to be closed and very cautious; consequently there is much "jockeying for position" when language is used.

everyone, when asked how he or she is, whether by a casual acquaintance or a close loved one, will respond with something like "fine." Common statements such as "fine," or "that's nice," or "How are you?" indicate that by mimicking at a very early age, man has learned acceptable ways of communicating without giving a great deal of preparatory thought. However, each individual must assume responsibility for the language which is used in binding community. It is the individual who initiates the use of language, who applies this bond of community. The bond of community which is formed by language, combines the speaker and listener or listeners into a whole which is greater than the sum of their individual parts. The added elements are language itself and the subject which it conveys.

It must be realized that language does not unite the speaker and listener in a way in which their separate individuality is permanently lost; however their corporate wholeness is determined by the situation in which the encounter takes place. For instance, when mutual understanding is achieved self-consciousness can be lost and total "absorption" in the subject discussed brings about corporate wholeness.

Even in instances where there is light conversation between friends, the mutually understood reality conveyed by language brings about oneness in community. If all parties of the conversation do not wonder due to boredom or lack of understanding, then community comes about because of that which is being discussed.

Without language there would be no binding power in community. But community is continually in either an actual or a potential state of dissension. This usually comes about when there is insufficient

communication due to a breakdown in the use of language. Conflict and disorder in language comes about when that which the speaker says either is not understood by or conflicts with the perceptions of reality of the listener. This is indicated by the response of the listener; it may be either assent or disagreement, question or scorn, but when language is used, there is always the potential for the healing bond.

The real impediment to the establishment of corporate identity comes about when the listener refuses to listen; when he does not use language as a means of reception. When this occurs, the speaker cannot possibly have a sufficient vocabulary to convey that which he wishes. Consequently there is no mutual understanding, no shared encounter with conveyed reality, no communication, and hence no corporate wholeness of community.

When the speaker and listener go beyond merely exchanging information and find themselves sharing a common interpretation of reality, then they are participating in community. When the speaker and the hearer are in community, each one's understanding of reality is both formulated and strengthened by their mutual understanding of conveyed reality. Responsibility for conveying reality is upon the shoulders of the speaker; responsibility for understanding belongs to the listener. It is this interaction between speaker and hearer which allows community to exist.

Words of interaction are more than exact replicas of reality, for with words there is always a possibility of variance in meaning. Because of this, the speaker and hearer must also assume the responsibility to apply that which has been said to their situation in life.

When the total of their experienced understanding of reality coincides, once again community occurs. In its function as a bond of community, language is taken for granted until it fails. Then there is much consternation and community breaks down, for mutual understanding and conveyed reality are missing.

Only when language is functioning can the speaker and hearer share a mutual understanding of a conveyed reality. This conveyed reality and language itself combine with the speaker and hearer to form a great corporate whole. Once this occurs, man's three dimensional concept of reality can be overcome, and the possibility of experiencing greater things is made possible.¹⁹

Paul states in Galatians that the spirit is the initiator of Church unity (Gal. 3:27). It is acknowledged throughout the New Testament that the spirit caused the Church to come into being. Paul tells the members of the Philippian Church that by "participation in the spirit . . . complete my joy by being in full accord and of one mind" (Phil. 1:2). At Jerusalem the believers are "of one heart and soul" (Acts 4:32). The spirit is the bond of the Church, but it is language which conveys the reality of the spirit to the assembled believers. The means of conveyance of the spirit is the "Word of God."

¹⁹Ebeling talks about experiencing reality. "In the first sense it is made available for knowing, in the second for experiencing. . . . In the first case I take part simply as an observer, in the second I really share in an encounter." Ebeling, The Nature of Faith, p. 86.

Chapter IV

GOD AND WORD

God and Word have been intertwined in our Christian tradition for centuries. Christians, particularly Protestant Christians, have traditionally laid special emphasis on the proclamation of the Word. Common agreement on the nature of the Word was and never is easily attained; today in the light of scientific thought, it is even more difficult to arrive at a consensus.

For about the first fifteen hundred years of the life of the western Church, there was mutual assent for a common language. This common language was first Greek, then more enduringly Latin. Each language allowed a mutual understanding over a widespread and divergent geographical area. Generation after generation shared a rich and common language heritage of the Church. Because the western Church had an official language, people could take refuge in the knowledge that the profaneness of secular words would not and could not contaminate formal worship. This language of worship was the major cohesive bond of the Church, for it allowed interpretation, exposition, and explanation in ways which were mutually understood and overwhelmingly accepted. But dissent arose within the Church over the use of Latin, and this was not an insignificant factor in the upheaval which led to the Reformation. The question was being continually asked, "Was not the Word also heard in the language of

the home, the street and the field?" Therefore, could it not also be proclaimed in the same language.

In our modern era, one of the major problems of the Church is that it frequently proclaims the Word of God with an uncertain voice. Yet how may one know if the Word is really heard so that it will be known when it is both heard and proclaimed. One encounters God and knows that He is being made manifest, as is all reality, by and through language. God's Word, proclaimed by means of language, has been in our Christian tradition for centuries. Ebeling states:

And when we enter into the question of the nature of "word," the question of language as the point at which all dimensions of our existence of reality intersect, then we find ourselves in the realm of the inexhaustible, whether that be interpreted as a sign of our power or of our importance. . . . It seems self-evident to us that it is the language which we command as human beings that gives us the standard by which we even talk of God, and also, on the contrary, that God, insofar as he really exists is independent of our talk of him.¹

It has been established that language is independent of man, but more important, God Himself is independent of both man and language. As the creative, creating force of the universe, God brings into creation all that He wishes. The first chapter of the Book of Genesis tells of God creating by speaking. He spoke and it was; there was no pause between the act of speaking and the act of creation. Much the same kind of phenomenon is happening today. God creates a relationship with man by the use of language. He speaks and a relationship comes into being. It is by His choosing that He reveals Himself by language to man, it is this revelation that causes the

¹Gerhard Ebeling, God and Word (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), p. 1.

creation of the relationship. Language is the means by which all reality, including God by His own choosing, is made known. Man uses the separate tool of language to gain a sense of understanding of that which is real, including God. Thus it is important to examine the word "God."

The Word God

With the incredible diversity of theological meaning of an intangible God, having a tangible definition of God by defining a word is a completely impossible task. What is possible, however, is to have a doctrine of God which implies the pre-existing relationship and to which man acquiesces in responding to the reality of that relationship. It is a doctrine of God which is sought so that man can understand the relationship, but not the creator of the relationship. "The doctrine of God is 'the most comprehensive and most difficult task of theology,' because it concerns the ground of theology itself."²

The difficulty of speaking of God is most evident when man chooses not to respond to the relationship which God has already created. The word God is the means of revealing and even transmitting the reality which is God. The word God is the means of founding the ground of theology, the ground of faith. It is this word God which is the starting place for all talk of the transcendent immanent divine. To speak of Jesus as the Son of God implies that there exists a prior

²Gerhard Ebeling, Word and Faith (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1963), p. 333. "Rudimentary reflections on speaking responsibly of God."

knowledge of the relationship which has come into being because God has created it, and therefore there is an understanding, at least at the unconscious level, of the word God. God is that power which creates the loving relationships, whether they be rationally understood or not, which binds the body of Christ. To most Church persons, God is most probably looked upon as a gracious, loving, heavenly father. This is the kind of relationship that God has created so that persons can and will relate to each other. Just as language functions as a mother tongue, a loving, sustaining means of support to those who are brought into the world, so too does God relate lovingly to His children, the members of the Body of Christ. Usually referred to as male, God is also like a mother hen who wants to protect her chicks under her wings (Matthew 23:37).

Jesus Himself strove diligently to proclaim that the relationship with God was one of love and compassion, all of which were brought together by the word "God." Jesus did not pray to a cosmic force which is the ultimate manifestation of the supreme. He prayed to His Father in heaven and he instructed those who would follow him to do likewise. The relationship between a loving Father, or in fact anything which fosters strong feelings of response, must have a name to which persons can relate. God, although a simple word, is extremely complex in its simplicity. It leaves open the possibility of all the power of the universe acting behind it, yet it also is a word to which the simplest person can relate.

The story is told that when Jesus asked His disciples who He was, they replied "Some say John the Baptist, others say Jeramiah or one of the prophets." Jesus said to them, "But who do you say that I

am?" Peter said, "You are my Existential Ground of Being." And Jesus said "What?" Of course Matthew relates that Peter said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matt. 16:16) and not the above, but it illustrates the reason why the word God is used to make manifest the reality of His being, but more important it points to the fact that no use of language can fully reveal or describe the nature of God. Therefore it is imperative that a term which conveys the existence of the divine be one to which even the simplest person can relate and with which anyone can be comfortable. It would be difficult to cry out to one's existential ground of being.

One of the unfortunate things that happens in theological training is that potential pastors are taught complex words, a sub-language with its own particular jargon, and those lay persons who can relate only to a loving heavenly father--God--usually find that they do not understand and are therefore most uncomfortable with terms which convey a much more complex concept. Paul did not (nor did any of the other Biblical writers) proclaim an Existential Ground of Being; he preached Christ Crucified and it is as much a stumbling block today as it was then. The discrepancy between what one takes into one's being and makes it his own, and what one is taught to believe is often a subtle one, but it must come to a place where an individual must make a stand. Then one must look for that which conveys the reality of God in such a way that both the personal experience and the community framework come to a place where they can be compatible. The goal is to find a doctrine of God which is both intelligible and revelatory.

Tradition as the Means of Obtaining a Doctrine of God

If we inquire into the possibility of a doctrine of God, then we find ourselves pointed to a tradition and dependent on tradition. . . . We are then committed to an imposing tradition of an intellectual, theological kind from which we have to learn and with which we have to enter into debate. . . . We come nearer to what is meant when in beside and behind that kind of intellectual, dogmatic tradition concerning the doctrine of God we become aware of a tradition of speaking about God which springs from entirely different depths and sweeps through the ages with overwhelming breadth and power--a tradition by which our speaking of God is supported and on which it is entirely dependent, even if we should struggle against it and the way it determined like some primeval river the whole mental landscape. It leaves no room for real independence, no possibility of independent and creative grasp of the subject "God."³

What Ebeling is referring to here is that one can only understand and relate to God in a way which has been taught to him.

Christians may experience a deep and intensely personal encounter with the risen Christ, but to give a complete and totally new and independent interpretation to this encounter with the divine is impossible. For as God created the possibility of relating with Him, so it is possible that man can only learn of this relationship and find ways to describe it by relying on past experience. Hence the word "God" conveys Him that caused the relationship of the Holy to the Human to come into being. The knowledge of God, as is the understanding of all reality, is based on previously understood conceptions, and then it is brought to the level of understanding by previously understood and used language by those who have also experienced the revelation of His being; this can be summed up in the word "tradition." For the Protestant Christian, it is the Bible which is the foundation of this

³Ibid., p. 335.

tradition. It is so much an integral part, that for many, the term "Word" and the "Bible" are synonymous. Not that this idea is particularly scriptural, but it is the traditional means by which language has revealed the existence of the Divine and the relationship that has been created when man has used the Word God to describe the existence of the Holy.

The use of the Bible as the primary source of tradition also carries with it the ramification of authority. The whole relationship between revelation and tradition is based on authority. Which experiences are valid, which are not; the authority which determines which relationship with the Holy is valid is the ultimate authority in one's life. The basic conflict of Protestant and Roman Catholic over the source of authority eventually comes to the point of who has what right to make which decision. Both claim that revelation gives credence to tradition, and that tradition provides the framework for revelation. Whatever the difference, it comes down to the concept that it is authority from which both tradition and revelation derive validity; and it is language which makes it possible to receive and respond to the expression of the divine.

In each case, it is language, and more specifically the word "God" which gives the ultimate authority. Invocation in God's name brings in and calls upon a power that no human possesses alone. It is the Holy which is referred to as God which causes one to respond to the ultimate power of the universe.

Of course one cannot be bound solely by the Bible or other means of tradition without having a sense of a personal experience of God. Both tradition and personal experience are necessary for one to

have a doctrine of God. For a doctrine of God expands the one word "God" and adds to it other words which reveal a greater development of the meaning of the word God. These additional words give a larger and greater base to the single word "God." Theology, the scientific study of the nature of God, enables one to reflect on the nature of God, but it can only be a means by which man seeks to understand God; it cannot be a means of having a complete knowledge of God. The reality of God is made manifest by experiencing Him, and this reality is conveyed by language, and it is this reality which pervades the totality of the human situation.

Therefore the step after dealing with the word God is to establish a doctrine of God, a means of defining what is meant when one says the word "God." Put another way, what is the response which is called for when one states the word "God"? How does one know that the second commandment is not being broken, that God's name is not being taken in vain? This is only done when one takes the historical perspective, by trusting the historical doctrines of the church, and assuming that those who made the statements about God in the past were not taking His name in vain; therefore one may speak the word God without fear and trembling only when it is the context of a historically understood faith. These standards have been passed down from the beginnings of the church. Powel Mills Dawley states:

The central problem of the early Christian theologians was the question of "the purpose and activity of God." The answer that they gave arose from their experience of redemption in Christ. The experience came first; theological formulation tried to make the experience intelligible.⁴

⁴Powel M. Dawley, Chapters in Church History (New York: National Council, 1950), p. 31.

It is only by experiencing God that one can use the Word God with awe and reverence. The goal is not to strike a balance as it were, but to show the interdependence of personal experience of God and the foundation of faith as discovered and proclaimed in the tradition of the church. Both experience and the tradition are verbalized and conveyed in the language of doctrine. The word God which has retained its ability through the ages still has validity today. There can never be a neutral experience of God, and because of this, one cannot accept or conceive of a God, learn of Him, experience His presence, and then refuse to accept His Lordship. Ebeling states:

The knowledge of the reality of God, strictly understood, leaves no room to disassociate ourselves from God. The man who truly knows him, must also recognize and confess and worship him.⁵

With this assertion of the existence of God, then modern man changes the priority of how God makes Himself known. Rather than God being at the beck and call of man, man recognizes that which is referred to by the word God is greater than that which can be defined by the language which man uses. When a person uses the word God, he is making himself a direct participant in and with the power of the universe by invoking the word which conveys the reality of God.

God gives Himself to be encountered by the individual who then participates in the knowing of God because he responds to the revelation of the manifestation of God.

Knowledge of God is essentially determined by the fact that God "gives" himself to be known, and so gives man to "know" himself as the creature already known by God. . . . Man's knowledge

⁵Ebeling, p. 345.

of God rests on his being known by God, his love of God on his being loved, his addressing God as God on his being addressed by God, his acceptance of God as God.⁶

In summary, man must make use of the word God in order to convey the experience of the divine. The word God carries the reality of God to those who would hear. The word God carries with it the concept that God chooses to reveal Himself.

The ultimate revelation of God to the Christian is Jesus of Nazareth, the incarnate Word. In essence, a Christian is to be Christ-centered in his or her theology. Therefore it is Jesus as the Word of God which will now be examined.

Jesus as the Word

The title of Word as designated to Jesus in the prologue of the Gospel of John and in two other passages of the Johannine writings (I John 1:1; Rev. 19:3). It is used as a name for Jesus in no other New Testament writing. However the title of Word or Logos is critical for all Christological discussions because it is the prime inference to "the unity in historical revelation of the incarnate and the pre-existent Jesus."⁷ Even if the name "Word" is completely lacking in other sections of the New Testament, the concept of a pre-existent Jesus is a constant through-out the primitive church. It is in the prologue to the Gospel of John that the concept of Jesus as the Incarnate Word has its most extensive development. Cullmann states:

⁶Ebeling, p. 345.

⁷Oscar Cullmann, The Christology of the New Testament (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1959), p. 258.

The word of Jesus--the word he preached--plays such an important part in the whole Gospel of John that one can hardly assume the evangelist did not think also of this "word" when in the prologue he identified Jesus as the Logos. The supposition that he did so is suggested even more strongly by the basic Johanne thought that Jesus not only brings revelation, but in his person "is" revelation . . . he brings light, life, and truth just because he himself is Light, Life, and Truth. So it is also with the Logos: he brings the word, because he is the Word.⁸

Hence it is Jesus which is the means of proclamation and therefore He is the proclamation, the Word of God which is to be proclaimed. It is Christ crucified which must be proclaimed; it is Christ resurrected which must be experienced and it is the Word through language that binds the Church, for this is the manifestation of Christ Himself.

Proclaiming the Word of God

The Protestant reformers saw the church as the institution of proclamation. The Word is God's message telling the world of the saving good news of Jesus Christ. The Word which became flesh is also witnessed in the scriptures. This Word is the Word which is to be proclaimed ever new and fresh within and out from the Ecclesia of God. Since the first century, the Church alone has been the living witness to this Word of God through its preservation and reading of the scripture and through its teaching and preaching. The response of God's people to the Word has renewed and continued the covenant community, the Body of Christ. Part of the listener's response to the Word has been the recognition and acceptance of the personal call of God to become a member of the Ecclesia called into being by Him. This

⁸Ibid., p. 259.

Word must be proclaimed with relevance to the actual lives of the members of the congregation in order that they might apply the Word to themselves and respond to the call. In the community's proclamation, it is listening and responding to the Word that Jesus reveals in His presence in His Church.

Proclamation that genuinely communicates the Word of God through the church is presenting the resurrected Christ as He exists in the Body through its members and the power of the spirit, all of which is made known through and by means of language. This kind of proclamation, complete with the response of the listener, is the authentic means of knowing the resurrected Christ.⁹

Proclamation is also important as a means for modern Christians to remain close to the teaching of the Apostles. They lived with the historical Jesus, they witnessed the crucifixion and the resurrection, they listened to His teaching, they broke bread with Him and shared a common cup, they were filled by the spirit and they had the reality of all this conveyed to them by means of language. The Good News which they proclaimed in their preaching and teaching remains an important source of truth and authority within the Church which they helped to form and which is today still the Church. Christ not only was the

⁹This is what Bultmann was referring to when he stated ". . . Christian faith did not exist until there was Christian kerygma; i.e., a kerygma proclaiming Jesus Christ the crucified and risen one--to be God's eschatological act of salvation." Rudolph Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1957), I, 3, "The Message of Jesus." Although Bultmann claims that there is a distinction between the proclamation of the Historical Jesus and the church's proclamation of the Christ of faith, it is the assertion of this paper that they were one and the same proclamation.

living Word; He spoke the Word of God to all who would hear. Thus, when His Word is proclaimed, Christ truly lives incarnate in the life of His Body. Proclamation therefore remains a primary mode of witness, of announcing and reporting to the world the Good News of Jesus Christ.

Jesus' proclamation of the Gospel was Good News; it was geared to helping people put their lives into a proper perspective; it was the means of dealing with the common occurrences of everyday life, into their life situations. This is the obligation that those who would proclaim in and from the Church have received.

Yet in our modern era one of the major problems of the church is that it frequently proclaims the Word of God with an uncertain voice. Yet how may one know if the Word is really heard so that it can be proclaimed?¹⁰ This Word which the true believer perceives and feels bound by, calls for and demands a response of faith; it does not wait for confirmation from the hearer; it demands a response, and those who respond positively will claim it without fear, for it is the manifestation, the revelation of God which it makes known. It was the same Word which Jesus proclaimed and made manifest in Himself.¹¹

¹⁰As one wise old patriarch of the small rural church which I now serve once stated, "theologians stray from the word and take all kinds of people with them. Every once in a while some lone soul will really hear the word and he will lead the folks back with him."

¹¹"... Jesus' word is not about faith, but is faith in a double sense; (a) it is a word spoken before God, a word of which God is the guarantor; (b) it is a word with which Jesus identifies himself so that it gives expression to his own surrender in faith to God. Jesus and his word are therefore one." Robert W. Funk, Language, Hermeneutic and the Word of God (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), p. 69.

Jesus proclaimed the Word to his followers and it remained in their midst by means of language. It caused the disciples to band together. It was only by and through language that the Word could be revealed to the world by and through first Jesus, and then the Church. The Church has the Word today. This Word of God requires no explanation; it speaks; it confronts and comforts; it afflicts and heals; it interprets, expounds upon and explains the revelation of God; it conveys the reality of God through Jesus Christ and it binds the Church. When God's Word manifests itself to man, he will listen, subject himself to it, and be bound by it into the community of believers, the Church universal, the Body of Christ. Unlike Latin which was bound by a set of grammatical rules, pronunciation guides and definitions, the language which conveys the Word draws its strength not by rules implemented by man, but by the reality of God which is revealed in the Word.

Chapter V

LANGUAGE: THE CONVEYOR OF THE BINDING WORD

Language interprets, expounds, and explains; it conveys reality; it is the bond of the corporate whole of community. Therefore language serves the hermeneutic function of conveying the binding Word of God to those assembled to hear, the Church, the Body of Christ. The idea of making the binding power of the Word mutually understood is graphically illustrated by the admonitions of the Apostle Paul toward "glossalalia." Because of these ecstatic utterings in the Corinthian Church, Paul felt that they should be kept in perspective and not be allowed to be destructive; in other words they should not disrupt disciplined, orderly worship. In I Corinthians 12, Paul addresses the Church concerning the various gifts of the spirit. Among those gifts given are "various kinds of tongues" and "The interpretation of tongues."¹ Paul goes on to state that there should be no speaking in tongues ". . . without disciplined hermenia (14:26ff) (which) means in fact controlling of the wild torrent of spiritual outbursts in the channel of the clear and disciplined but no less

¹I Cor. 12:10. Behm refers to the interpretation of tongues as that which ". . . is rather the conversion of what is unintelligible into what is intelligible and therefore an explanation of the spiritual movement which fills the ecstatic." Johannes Behm, "ερμηνευω," in Gerhard Kittel (ed.), Theological Dictionary of the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), II, 665.

genuine operation of the spirit through the word."² The Revelation³ of this Word which conveys the spirit in and through the church is a primary concern of those who participate in the Body of Christ.

When the reality of the Word of God is proclaimed, then those who hear are bound together into a common whole by common understanding. If the Word is not heard, and the Words of the language which is implemented are not understood, then community cannot exist. If language is not accompanied by understanding then reality cannot be conveyed, the Word cannot be proclaimed, and it cannot act as a binding agent. Because of this possibility, frequently there is too much attempted clarification; when in fact it is truly God's Word which is proclaimed, then no human need fear not having the ability to convey it.⁴ The Lord will provide. But proclaiming of the Word takes courage, for there is always the chance that it has not been heard, and the proclamation will be futile.⁵ God must initiate the proclamation of his Word. All too often it

²Ibid.

³"Revelation literally means an unveiling, the lifting of an obscuring veil, so as to disclose something formerly hidden." John Baillie, The Idea of Revelation in Recent Thought (New York: Columbia University Press, 1956), p. 19.

⁴"He who aspires to the enunciation of the word must first learn to hear it; and he who hears the word will have found the means to articulate it." Robert W. Funk, Language, Hermeneutic and the Word of God (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), p. 7.

⁵". . . The preaching of the Gospel has taken on the character of prattle. This means that the preached word no longer proceeds out of the reality to which it is supposed to give expression." Ibid., p. 9.

seems as if man strives to enunciate the Word without having heard.⁶

Where does one hear the Word of God? Primarily by listening to it whisper through the pages of the Bible. The so-called "higher-critical method" has allowed the integrity of the text to be discovered, but the emphasis is on the ability, ingenuity, and integrity of the interpreter. This method seemingly disregards the historical situation of the interpreter himself. This includes his prejudices and biases which are often manifested unconsciously.

The Word of God is restricted by the fallibility of man, but even with the constant threat of restriction, man must continually strive to discover its revelation by and through language, and use this same medium to proclaim it. Language is the means by which the Word of God is proclaimed. Therefore language must be carefully scrutinized before it can be the means of revelation. The Biblical text has undergone almost two thousand years of constant scrutiny, and because of this it is the Bible which most clearly conveys the Word of God. The Word reveals itself through the text, and he who would hear and proclaim must subject himself to the language of the text.⁷ The Bible and the Word of God are not synonymous, but the Word and the language of the text are so intertwined that it is extremely

⁶"When God is silent, man becomes a gossip; when God speaks and man hears, kerygmatic language is born and the gospel is preached." Ibid.

⁷"It is not the text that requires interpretation, but--if the text is called forth by what it says--the interpreter." Ibid., p. 12.

difficult to distinguish one from the other.⁸ But as language cannot be limited to an objective definition, neither can the Word of God.⁹

If a person has not heard the Word of God, then he is neither able to understand nor proclaim it. It is only from within and proceeding forth from the Church that the Word can be proclaimed. The Word is conveyed by and through the language which binds the Body of Christ. When an unseen God speaks, his Word reveals itself by means of language. It is this same language which conveys the reality of the spirit to the members of the Body.¹⁰

Paul maintains that it is the Spirit which binds the Body. But the spirit is conveyed into its binding process by and through language. It is this community, which language binds, which is separate and distinct from the rest of the world.¹¹

John elucidates on the binding power of language in another

⁸Funk goes on to state that ". . . those concerned for the renewal of the word cannot remind each other until someone is himself reminded, until someone is again addressed by the text of faith in such a way that hearing is restored." Ibid., p. 13. Stated another way, the ". . . language of the text has priority over the thought of the interpreter." Ibid., p. 50.

⁹"The word to be spoken is not mere word, but the word that creates, brings into being. Like the word spoken in creation, it is the word that brings men from death to life or the word that condemns. By it men are lost and by it men are saved. It is the word spoken and therefore in the authority of God." Ibid., p. 13.

¹⁰"For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For by one spirit we were all baptized into one body, so it is with Christ. For by one spirit we were all baptized into one body--Jews or Greeks, slaves or free--and all were made to drink of one spirit." I Cor. 12:12-13.

¹¹Behm, II, 698-699.

way. In the high priestly prayer in the seventeenth chapter of the Fourth Gospel, he depicts Jesus as praying:

I do not pray for these only, but also for those who believe in me through their word, that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. The glory which thou hast given me I have given to them, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that thou hast sent me and hast loved them even as thou hast loved me (John 17:20-23).

It is their "Word" which allows them to believe and to be one. It is their Word because it is the Word that Jesus left in the community by and through the language that he spoke. It is this community, the Body of Christ, which has made possible the revelation of this Word for the past 2000 years. The authors of the New Testament text are speaking from within the community of the primitive Church, and they are relating their understanding of the revealed Word of God. It is their Word, for Jesus left it with them, and as the members of His Body, they are compelled to proclaim it. It binds Christ's Body and it makes possible the proclamation of the Word to future believers. Each succeeding generation will be held together in community by the language which the Church proclaims the Word.

Language is the means by which God is made known. Each who would make Him known must strive to first hear his Word and then take a chance that his proclamation will make the binding power of God's Word known to others. It is the experience of the resurrected Christ which gives the power to hear and proclaim the Word in and from the Church, the community of Believers, the Body of Christ.

CONCLUSION

The Church has been shown to be the New Chosen Children of Israel, deeply rooted in the Old Testament concept of God having a Chosen People. The Church is a partaker of the New Covenant instituted by Jesus the Christ. As the Ecclesia, Christians have been called by God in Christ to be members of His body, the Church. This assembly of believers was instigated by God in Christ, not by men; it is a gathering of those who have experienced the risen Lord.

As Christ's Body now representing Him in the world, the Church is to develop a unity and togetherness bound by God's Word. Oneness in the body stresses the corporate wholeness and not individuality. To be Christian is to belong to the Body. The importance of members proclaiming the Gospel is a persistent theme in the New Testament. In relating to one another, the individuals also relate to Christ who is the source of the Word which is to be proclaimed.

It is language which serves as the means of conveying all reality; therefore it is language which makes possible the conveyance of the Holy in the worship of the church. The church acts as the agent of the proclamation of the Word of God, both through preaching and teaching, kerygma and didache. The New Hermeneutic's perspective on language emphasizes the continual process, a "living process" which not only conveys reality, but it acts as the bonding agent of all community, particularly the Church. Language must be both understood and heard; therefore simple words such as "God" which convey the

concept of the Holy must go beyond rational expression to the level of experience. It is Jesus who is the Word of God, and it is the Bible, interpreted from and within His Body that allows the Word to be proclaimed with authority and authenticity. Christ, the Incarnate Word, is present in all stages of the life of the church. Therefore it can be said that the church truly is the agent of proclamation. This is because of the preaching, teaching, worshipping, and bonding of Christ's Body by means of language.

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